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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes a study conducted during 1993-94 evaluating rural secondary education in Alaska. The six components of the study included: (1) a survey of boarding school graduates concerning how well their educational experience prepared them for college, trade school, and employment; (2) a telephone survey of 800 rural households assessing the quality of rural education; (3) a two-part review of national research and Alaskan research on rural education, outlining options for improving rural secondary education, and identifying benefits and limitations of the small local high school and residential high school; (4) a study comparing the achievement of rural and urban students at the University of Alaska; (5) interviews with rural high school teachers, superintendents, boarding school personnel, and other stakeholders of rural education; and (6) an analysis identifying the minimum criteria and infrastructure needs for boarding school development and operations. From this research and public hearings, a task force recommended that the state should (1) facilitate the development of educational plans and assessments for rural secondary education at the local level; (2) investigate the feasibility of developing a junior college program at a rural boarding school; (3) facilitate the development of consolidated residential high schools; (4) enhance funding dedicated to public education; and (5) rewrite labor and tenure laws to allow school districts more control in hiring teachers. (LP)

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Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study

Executive Summary

Prepared for:

*State of Alaska
Department of Education*

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May 1994

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Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study

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Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study

Introduction

In April 1993, the Alaska Department of Education contracted with the McDowell Group, a Juneau-based research and consulting firm, to conduct the *Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study*. The study involved evaluating high school educational opportunities currently available to rural students and developing potential solutions to rural Alaska's secondary education needs.

In conjunction with a task force of persons involved in rural education, the study, composed of six independent reports, was completed, recommendations were developed, and presented to the Department of Education. This Executive Summary provides brief summaries of the recommendations and of each report. The interested reader is strongly urged to read the complete report.

The six components of the *Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study* include:

- ◆ **Mt. Edgecumbe High School Graduate Survey.** In the spring of 1993, all Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS) graduates since 1986 (approximately 300) were mailed surveys designed to gather their opinions about how well the boarding school experience prepared them for college, trade school, and employment. In an attempt to survey all graduates, follow-up telephone calls were also made. In all, 152 surveys were completed.
- ◆ **Rural Community Household Survey.** In the spring of 1993, a telephone survey of 800 rural households was conducted to gauge public attitudes about high school educational opportunities currently available in rural communities. This survey also provided insight into what improvements to secondary education the rural public would like to see.
- ◆ **Research Summary and Bibliography.** In December 1993, a two-part research review was developed. Part I covered national research and outlined several options to improve rural secondary education delivery. Part II reviewed Alaska research, indicating the benefits and limitations of the small local high school and residential high school.

- ◆ **Rural Student Achievement in the University of Alaska System.** In December 1993, an analysis of data from the University of Alaska compared the achievement of students from Rural Education Attendance Areas (REAAAs) with their urban counterparts.
- ◆ **Executive Interviews.** In January 1994, a series of interviews were conducted with a wide range of persons involved in rural high school education, including teachers, superintendents, boarding school personnel, school board members, former students, researchers, and parents.
- ◆ **Boarding School Site Criteria.** In February 1994, an analysis to identify the minimum criteria and infrastructure needs for boarding school development and operations was performed.

These six reports were presented to the task force. From these reports and other sources, the task force developed a set of specific recommendations which were presented to the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education in February, 1994. These recommendations identified ways to improve rural high school education in Alaska.

A summary of these recommendations is presented in this Executive Summary. However, the *Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study Task Force Recommendations* are available from the Department of Education as an independent report. The interested reader is urged to consult the report for a complete discussion of the recommendations.

Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study

Rural Secondary Education Task Force

A task force of five individuals, very active in rural education, was appointed to review the research completed by the McDowell Group and to preside over four public hearings on rural secondary education. Task force nominees were selected from the Alaska Parent Teacher Association, the Alaskan Federation of Natives, and the Alaska Association of School Boards. The members of the task force were:

Carole Huntington, *Chair - Galena, Alaska*

Jim LaBelle - *Anchorage, Alaska*

Pete Schaeffer - *Kotzebue, Alaska*

Patricia "Di" Shearer - *Metlakatla, Alaska*

Mike Williams - *Akiak, Alaska*

Four public hearings, based in Ketchikan, Fairbanks, Kotzebue and Bethel, with a total of one hundred sites connected by teleconference network, were held. The hearings were transcribed and the written records provided to all task force members.

The focus of the hearings was to solicit public input on ways to enhance local high schools programs, as well as to gauge interest in expanding Mt. Edgecumbe High School or developing regional boarding schools.

After reviewing the public testimony and the completed research projects prepared by the McDowell Group, the Task Force developed recommendations for enhancing rural high school education.

Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study

Task Force Summary Recommendations

The State should facilitate the development of education plans and assessments for rural secondary education with community and regional leaders. Statewide planning for education does not work in Alaska, a state with a widely diverse population and, therefore, needs. The State should encourage to the maximum extent possible local control, responsibility and ownership of and for rural high school education.

The State should investigate the feasibility of developing a junior college curriculum/program at Mt. Edgecumbe. College bound rural high school students need a strong transitional program. Mt. Edgecumbe could be expanded into a junior college program which accepts high school juniors and assists in the transition to a bachelor-degree program. However, while this is being explored, Mt. Edgecumbe High School needs to increase parental and community involvement. An advisory school board would give voice to the parents and communities of Mt. Edgecumbe students.

The State should facilitate the development of consolidated high schools at the district or REAA level. Survey research and other data indicates a strong demand for boarding school capacity in Alaska. Mt. Edgecumbe High School is an important option that should be preserved for rural students. However, it is recommended that further boarding school development occur at the local or district level.

The State should enhance funding dedicated to the support of public education. It will be very difficult to improve the quality of rural high school education under the constant threat of declining funding. For rural communities and districts to offer a quality education, the State must insure a more predictable and sustained level of funding.

The State should rewrite labor and tenure laws in favor of the children. Current tenure law is particularly troublesome for rural districts. Rural districts require more flexibility, especially during periods of declining funding. Communities and districts need more control in determining who teaches their children.

Additional recommendations and supporting discussion concerning boarding schools, vocational education, distance learning, correspondence programs and high school/university transitional programs can be found in the *Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study Task Force Recommendations*.

Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study

Mt. Edgecumbe High School Graduate Survey

Survey Methodology

In the spring of 1993, all Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS) graduates since 1986 (approximately 300) were mailed surveys designed to gather their opinions about how well the boarding school experience prepared them for college, trade school and employment. In an attempt to survey all graduates, follow-up telephone calls were also made. In all, 152 surveys were completed.

Because of the greater self-selection bias associated with mail-out surveys (i.e., people can either choose to complete the survey or not), this cannot be considered a representative random sample of MEHS graduates. Although these results capture accurately only the opinions of those surveyed, they do provide insight into the boarding school experience at MEHS and how well it prepares students for life after high school. This survey does not represent the opinions of those students who have attended but did not graduate from Mt. Edgecumbe High School.

Summary of MEHS Graduate Survey Results

- ◆ 97% stated the quality of education received at MEHS was better than what they would have received in their home communities.
- ◆ Nearly three-quarters (73%) of the graduates stated they would like to see their own children attend Mt. Edgecumbe High School. Those graduating in 1992 felt the strongest about their children attending MEHS (92%).
- ◆ Academic challenge ranked as the top reason to send children to MEHS. Positive discipline, extracurricular activities, expanded/good curriculum and better/more teachers were also cited as reasons.
- ◆ Among those graduates who would prefer not to send their children to MEHS, the reasons most often cited were "they would miss their children" and "the school would be too far away from home". Others commented adversely about the dormitory lifestyle. Some stated that it would be the child's choice whether to attend or not.

- ◆ Overall, MEHS graduates rated the quality of their courses quite highly. On a scale of 1–poor to 5–excellent, computer sciences were rated highest at 4.7. Physical education/health and social studies were rated at 4.5. English was rated 4.4, followed by foreign languages and sciences each with 4.3. Mathematics was rated 4.1.
- ◆ 73% of MEHS graduates felt that the school did a good job preparing them for continuing their education. 44% of past graduates described the preparation for their current jobs as more than adequate or higher, while 32% described their job preparation as adequate.
- ◆ 55% of the past graduates gave MEHS an overall performance rating of "A- to A". This was reflected in the positive ratings given to staff and the quality of services provided. 5% of the graduates rated MEHS with a C+ or below.
- ◆ More than one-third of the graduates rated the residence hall experience as "A to A-". 42% awarded above average marks of "B to B+", however 11% rated the residence hall experience as below average.

Demographics

- ◆ 47% of those responding to the survey graduated between 1986 and 1989. The remainder graduated between 1990 and 1992.
- ◆ 79% had attended college/technical/trade school after graduating from MEHS. 36% were working in their hometown, while 33% were working outside of their home community. 7% were in the military.
- ◆ There were a wide variety of hometowns represented, with 22% of the respondents coming from the Wade Hampton census area. Equal percentages (13%) came from each of the Aleutians West and the Yukon Koyukuk census area.
- ◆ 38% were employed full-time when the survey was conducted. 34% were employed part-time and more than one-quarter were unemployed. Of those employed, 37% were in the private sector and 31% worked in the government sector. 60% were currently attending post-secondary education institutions.
- ◆ Nearly two-thirds of the graduates interviewed attended high school in their home community at some time during their secondary education.

For a complete discussion of the methodology and results of this survey, the reader is urged to read the complete report.

Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study

Alaska Rural Household Survey

Survey Methodology

A total of 817 randomly selected rural Alaska households were interviewed. This included 563 households with children under 18 years of age. Among this group, 212 households currently had children in a local high school.

To measure the opinions of rural residents who recently attended a college or trade school, a second non-random telephone survey was conducted. An additional 164 rural residents who attended college or trade school within the last five years were interviewed.

The household survey sample was drawn primarily from Rural Education Attendance Areas (REAAs). Other largely rural areas of the state were added to the sample. The number of surveys conducted in each area was approximately proportional to the population of the area. Phone numbers were selected randomly from published directories and other sources.

The survey's maximum margin of error overall is 3.5% at the 95% confidence level. While comparative survey results at the district or REAA level are presented, the information should not be viewed as necessarily representative of all households in the district. Other limitations to the data include under-representation of households with only one or two members, non-response bias, households with no telephones and language barriers.

Summary of Rural Community Household Survey Results

- ◆ 40% of rural households rate the quality of high school education available to their children as "good" or "excellent". 42% rate high school education in their community as fair. 16% rated it as "poor" or "very poor".
- ◆ 36% of rural Alaska Natives describe the quality of rural high school education as "good" or "excellent" while 47% of rural non-Natives hold that opinion.
- ◆ More than one-half (58%) of rural households think the quality of high school education available in their communities is the same or better than in urban areas.

- ◆ Among households with children who recently attended high school, two-thirds believe the education their children received adequately prepared them for life after high school; however, only 36% believe their children are prepared "well" or "very well" *academically* for college.
- ◆ 23% of Alaska Native households describe their children as "well" or "very well" prepared for college academically while 61% of non-Natives believe this of their children.
- ◆ 62% of rural households feel community-based high schools are the best way to provide education. 30% feel regional high schools are the best way. Good teachers, positive academic challenge and strong curriculum, and quality of life are the most often mentioned as reasons for favoring community-based high schools.
- ◆ Districts where regional boarding schools are strongly supported include Yupiit, Pribilof, Yukon/Koyukuk and Kuspuk. Alaska Natives favor boarding schools more than non-Natives by a ratio of nearly two to one. Lower income households are more likely to favor boarding schools than high income households.
- ◆ One-half of rural households with high school age children believe the educational opportunities available at a boarding school are better than at their community-based high schools. One-third believe the opportunities are about the same and 9% think they are worse.
- ◆ Expand curriculum, more teachers, increase academic challenge, better cultural studies and better buildings are stated as primary ways to improve high school education for rural children. 14% of households believe making Mt. Edgecumbe High School and/or other regional boarding schools available to all students is the best way to improve rural high school education.
- ◆ 48% of rural households with high school age children feel correspondence programs are either better or the same as their community-based high school.

For a complete discussion of the methodology and findings of this survey, the interested reader is urged to read the complete report.

Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study

National Research Summary and Bibliography

Research suggests several options for improving rural secondary education delivery. These options include facilitating greater use of telecommunication and computer technology, fostering more cooperative relationships between rural schools and universities in terms of pre-service and in-service training, enabling more cost effective and educationally efficient shared services between schools, reassessing funding of rural secondary schools, or making residential high schools more available as an option for rural students.

With the use of telecommunications and computers, rural teachers could be educated more as generalists, rather than the unrealistic expectation to be competent specialists in several subjects. Rural teacher training would emphasize management of instructional resources and understanding the nature of students' learning of different subjects. Breadth rather than depth of topics would be emphasized. Students would have access to software instructional programs, databases, and instruction by specialized teachers, via telecommunication, which would also allow them contact with other students. Although idealized, this scenario illustrates how many of the challenges facing rural education – lack of quality specialized courses, lack of contact with a variety of other students and teachers, rural teacher burnout – could be addressed by advanced technology.

If local high schools are to remain the primary system for delivering rural secondary education, the issue of recruiting and retaining qualified rural teachers must be addressed and constantly monitored. Rural teachers are often discouraged by the lack of staff development opportunities and are not prepared for the realities of rural living and teaching. Methods of effective pre-service training and recruitment of rural teachers, and tactics to improve professional development must be discussed and upgraded.

Managing local resources presents unique challenges to the rural community. Given the small number of students, operating costs are generally higher for rural schools. Efforts must be focused on how to improve financial management, share services between schools, and develop partnerships between rural schools and businesses.

It is also becoming evident that state policies regarding teacher certification, course requirements, and other areas must be viewed realistically in the rural context. Rural school districts are often held accountable for efficiencies they cannot possibly achieve. Rural schools need concrete facilitation in achieving these goals.

Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study

Alaska Research Summary and Bibliography

During territorial days, rural education in Alaska was developed by outside entities, i.e., missionaries, U. S. Bureau of Education and the Secretary of Interior. Boarding school programs in Oregon and Oklahoma were utilized as boarding school and boarding home programs were developing inside the state.

During the early 1970's, research indicated that Alaska Native students were experiencing severe emotional and social problems associated with boarding school and home programs. The "Molly Hootch" lawsuit led to the development of community-based high schools. Today, there are high schools in almost every rural community in Alaska yet there are wide variations in the quality of these educational programs.

During this time, decentralization became a dominant policy for rural secondary education. Research indicates that for a local school board to have a positive influence on the educational system there must be a similarity in purpose and goals between the community and school professionals. There must be community involvement, stability and partnership between school and community as well as a positive relationship with district administration.

The recruitment, training and professional development of teachers, especially Native teachers, must be addressed in order for rural secondary education to improve. Much of the research calls for competency and/or mastery-based programs. Innovative strategies, such as classrooms without boundaries, travel programs and distance learning techniques, must continued to be explored and developed in order to improve the quality of rural education.

The most controversial and difficult issue for rural secondary education in Alaska today is boarding schools versus local high schools. Local communities want options yet cannot decide what those options should be. While there are currently a number of options, that is, a rural student could attend a local high school, enroll in correspondence, attend Mt. Edgecumbe, or even participate in a boarding home program, declining revenues mandate finding educationally effective and cost efficient ways to provide education for rural secondary students.

A review of the research shows the importance and value of the small local high school. There is evidence of the benefits to rural students and especially to Alaska Natives, the most important being the ability to grow up in a family environment. However, it is clear that there is no one right answer to the question of the best way to educate rural secondary students. Today, there is the realization that some combination or compromise position may be the most effective monetarily as well as educationally.

Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study

Rural Student Achievement in the University of Alaska System

Methodology

In this study, the collegiate achievement of students whose high school or community was associated with a Rural Education Attendance Area (REAA) as their place of origin was compared to the achievement of students from urban school districts. With data provided by the University of Alaska Statewide Institutional Research, new full-time students who entered the University of Alaska system in the Fall of 1988 were assessed according to the number of completed credit hours, the number of degrees/certificates earned and the number currently enrolled through the Spring of 1993.

The data only measures achievement at the University of Alaska system to date and does not equate levels or lack of achievement with "drop-outs". That is, since there was no method to ascertain the number of students who may have transferred to another university, those students no longer enrolled cannot be considered drop-outs.

The term "early leaver" is applied to individuals who were new full-time students in 1988 and earned less than 25 credit hours (less than a full year of study) between Fall of 1988 and Spring of 1993.

In summary, this analysis presents only a "snap shot" of student achievement. It should not be used as a measure of the quality of education available within the University of Alaska system. The data reflects only how rural students compare to urban students, how Natives compare to non-Natives, and how males compare to females in terms of collegiate achievement.

Because of the complexity of these data, the interested reader is strongly urged to consult the complete report for a full discussion of this analysis.

Summary of Analysis

- ◆ The University of Alaska 1988 freshman class included 193 full-time students from REAAs and 1,463 students from urban school districts.
- ◆ To date, one-half (54%) of the students from REAAs have completed less than one full year's study, compared to 42% of students identified from urban districts.

- ◆ Approximately the same percentage of male and female students from REAAs (54% and 55%) were early leavers. 39% of urban females and 45% of urban males were early leavers from the University of Alaska system.
- ◆ 63% of Native students from REAAs and 57% of Native students from urban school districts earned less than 25 credit hours, which were the highest rates overall.
- ◆ 12% of REAA students earned degrees or certificates from the University of Alaska as compared to 31% of students from urban areas.
- ◆ 15% of males from REAAs earned degrees/certificates compared to 11% of females. Female urban students earned degrees/certificates twice as often as male urban students (41% compared to 19%).
- ◆ White students from urban school districts earned degrees/certificates at least twice as often as all other racial categories in both urban and REAA districts. White students from REAAs and Native students from urban school districts earned degrees/certificates at about the same rate (15% and 16% respectively).
- ◆ 36% of students from REAAs either earned a degree or are currently enrolled in the University system while 64% are currently not enrolled and have not earned a degree. This gives students from REAAs a potential completion rate of 36%. By comparison, urban students have a potential completion rate of 53%.

Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study

Executive Interviews

The Rural Alaska Secondary Education Task Force requested a series of executive interviews be conducted with selected persons who have experience with high school education in rural Alaska. The interviews were conducted by telephone over a period of three weeks. While there was a structure used during the interview, the respondents were encouraged to speak in a free-form style.

The following are a sample of the specific recommendations or main points of some of these interviews.

Jean Ann Alter taught at Nome-Beltz High School from 1969 to 1977 and currently works for the Department of Education.

Education should fit the unique characteristics, culture and environment of rural Alaska. The best education comes out of communities that are involved with their schools. The State should help communities and families become healthy. The State should set academic standards, but the community should decide the shape and role of education.

Ray Barnhardt is with the University of Alaska Fairbanks, specializing in rural high school education and Native education. He is the coordinator of the Cross Cultural Education Development (XCED) Program.

Rural high schools must utilize and incorporate the community's resources. We do not need another state-operated boarding school. Mt. Edgecumbe should be maintained. Develop regional boarding schools which are supplemental to the existing rural high schools.

Ronelle Beardsley was born in Kake, attended school and eventually taught in Kake for three years. She is working on a Master's in special education and a Master's in business education.

Rural students need experienced, qualified and well prepared teachers. Rural schools need to be financially supported. Alaska Native culture should be taught in schools. Education should address the students who won't go on to college.

Charlotte Brower, originally from Selawik, has served as Magistrate in Barrow and is a member of the North Slope Borough School Board.

Rural schools need to develop mastery- and competency-based curricula. Another state-operated boarding school should be located in the northern region of the state. People should not expect less of rural education.

Mark Charlie grew up in rural Alaska and serves on the Lower Kuskokwim School Board.

Local control of education is the best way for it to improve. All REAAs should have local advisory school boards. Close Mt. Edgecumbe, put more money into local schools and programs like the Rural Alaska Honors Institute (RAHI) and Upward Bound.

Linda Clement has more than twenty years experience working as an educator in rural Alaska including Kake, Metlakatla, and a boarding school in Bethel.

Parental involvement is the key to rural student success. Teach the basics and vocational education. Mt. Edgecumbe's admission policies should be changed. No new boarding schools should be built.

Leland Dishman has been a principal in Georgia, St. Paul/St. George in the Pribilofs and is currently Superintendent of the Yupiit School District.

Teachers must be clear about what is expected of them. Parental support is critical to the success of a rural high school. Regional boarding schools or consolidated high school and boarding home projects are effective ways of providing rural students with a quality high school education.

Vicki Hamilton was born and raised in Sitka. She has been involved in the Craig schools for the last twenty years and recently helped teach the Tlingit language in kindergarten.

Teachers have to have high expectations. Lazy teachers have lazy students. The State should examine a magnet school with a vocational education specialty. The State should address the tenure of teachers. More successful teachers should be monetarily rewarded.

Mike Irwin, born and raised in Nenana, has a Bachelor's and a Master's degree. He is the Executive Director of the Alaska Natives Commission.

The success of rural education is directly linked with the health of the individual, family and community. The State must allow a stronger connection between rural schools and their communities. Boarding schools could be regional, semester-based programs.

Stowell Johnstone has thirty years experience in education and is the Executive Director of the Alaska Committee Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges which drafts accreditation standards for Alaska schools. He is also a member of the Alaska State Board of Education.

The first step to changing the system is to identify the goals of education. Next there should be control of education at the local level. There needs to be a performance-based criteria in education. Promote the desire for better schools in the mind of the adult community.

Judith Kleinfeld is a professor with the University of Alaska Fairbanks and has published extensively on rural and Native education issues.

There are numerous subtle psychological and social factors which contribute to the success of a boarding school. It may not be possible to replicate the success of St. Mary's or Mt. Edgecumbe. School personnel and the community must agree on the theme for their school. Teacher preparation is the key to improving the quality of rural education.

Sally Kookesh attended Wrangell Institute and Mt. Edgecumbe High School. She is a member of the Chatham Regional Education Attendance Area school board.

Children need to be home in their own community. Mt. Edgecumbe should become a junior college for students coming out of rural Alaska. Increase the tenure laws to five years. Establish funding standards and give rural schools their full PL 874 funding. Develop a set of standards and establish an assessment procedure.

Maynard Londborg started Covenant High School in Unalakleet in 1954. He is now the director of a training school for Native leaders in Anchorage.

The key is keeping the students as close to home as possible. Community support is essential to the success of a boarding school. Expanding Mt. Edgecumbe could be detrimental educationally and socially. It would be preferable to open another school rather than risk losing the sense of "community" Mt. Edgecumbe has now.

Gerald McBeath is a professor at University of Alaska Fairbanks and serves on the Fairbanks North Star Borough School Board.

Close all rural high schools. Build boarding schools. The State should intervene in school districts that do not offer good education. Rural education should not differ from urban education. Both should offer a Native curriculum.

Sue McHenry has worked for Rural Student Services at the University of Alaska Fairbanks since 1972 and holds a Bachelor's and a Master's. She has been involved in Upward Bound and the Rural Alaska Honors Institute (RAHI).

Local schools with supplementary programs work best for rural students. Teachers should have strong ties to the community. The State should not fund new boarding schools at the expense of local schools. The State should fund satellite courses, train rural teachers and supplementary programs like RAHI and Upward Bound.

Roy Nageak attended Chemawa boarding school and is a member of the North Slope Borough School Board and the Association of Alaska School Boards.

Local control of education works best for rural students. Local people should decide the role of education. Rural education will work better if it fits the unique characteristics, culture and environment of Alaska. Put more money into local schools.

Wilmer Oudal worked at Covenant High School in Unalakleet and was principal in Glennallen.

Rural students need higher expectations placed on them. Currently, there are high grades for low productivity in the village high schools. There needs to be standards of achievement with a direct relation to teaching effectiveness and accreditation. All high school curriculum should be college-oriented. Remember that high school students are children, not young adults.

Father Jim Sebesta serves as a Jesuit priest in rural Alaska and has taught in rural communities.

Rural students work best with competent Native teachers. The health of the community and family needs to be addressed in order to improve education. The State has to foster more local involvement in the education system.

Gil Truitt was born and raised in Sitka, graduated from Mt. Edgecumbe, has a Master's in education and served as administrator of Mt. Edgecumbe High School for thirty-three years.

Basic curriculum needs to be emphasized. Expand Mt. Edgecumbe's capacity. Hire more Alaskan teachers.

John Witteveen has been an educator in Kodiak for twenty years and soon will be retiring from the position of Superintendent for the Kodiak School District.

Regional boarding schools or boarding home programs are a cost effective as well as an educationally and culturally acceptable way of educating rural students. Allow a state boarding home stipend even if there is a high school in the village. Develop a state-operated satellite system.

In the final document of the **Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study** there are detailed summaries of each of the interviews conducted.

Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study

Boarding School Site Criteria

The purpose of this study was to identify site criteria for increasing Alaska's State-operated boarding school capacity. This report might act as a guide during the process of selecting a site for boarding school development.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka, the State's only boarding school, was used as the model for this analysis. To match the quality of the program available at Mt. Edgecumbe High School, a potential host community must offer:

- ◆ A well developed transportation infrastructure, including regular jet service and year-round surface freight access. This will reduce the cost of boarding school operations by at least 20% compared to areas that are off-road or without year-round barge access. Transportation infrastructure is also an important safety consideration (transporting students for extracurricular activities, emergency medical evacuation, etc.).
- ◆ Immediately available professional public safety resources, such as fire suppression, emergency medical services, and police.
- ◆ A large enough employment base to insure an adequate supply of skilled labor. It is cost prohibitive to maintain a full-time staff of specialized maintenance people for boarding school operations. Sitka's economy includes about 60 special trade contractors.
- ◆ A well-developed service and supply sector. Many services required to operate a boarding school should be contracted, reducing operation costs. Food service, laundry, janitorial, and transportation services are contracted at Mt. Edgecumbe.
- ◆ Immediate access to University of Alaska or other post-secondary education programs and resources. Mt. Edgecumbe High School, the University of Alaska Southeast in Sitka and Sheldon Jackson College have a strong interactive relationship. That relationship provides educational opportunities to Mt. Edgecumbe students that would not otherwise be possible.
- ◆ Immediate access to major health care resources. For example, the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Corporation (SEARHC) facility in Sitka offers, in addition to basic health care, mental health care programs, alcohol rehabilitation, and other services. Eighty-five percent of Mt. Edgecumbe's students receive free medical, dental and other health care services through SEARHC.

- ◆ A history of supporting educational institutions and activities. Sitka has a long history of supporting education. While most communities would welcome the economic development associated with a boarding school, it is less clear whether the communities would be receptive to the influx of young people.
- ◆ Tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity. Sitka's population is 20% Native and the Native community has a very strong cultural presence. Mt. Edgecumbe's predominantly Native enrollment fits easily into the community of Sitka.
- ◆ Ideally, a local high school, offering educational, social, recreational and competitive interaction with boarding school students.
- ◆ A secure site somewhat isolated from the population center, though preferably still within walking distance of stores, restaurants and recreational opportunities.

Certainly a community need not meet all of these criteria to host a boarding school. However, if a community does not meet a majority of these criteria, there would be some sacrifice, either in terms of the quality of education, the quality of the social/cultural development of the students, student safety, or the cost of school operations.

One of the most important site criteria is perhaps one only Sitka can offer. That criteria is tradition. Mt. Edgecumbe High School has a strong tradition of providing a high quality education. It has produced many of the State's Native leaders. It is this tradition that continues to draw students from throughout Alaska. This tradition is not transferable.

Should the State decide to increase its boarding school capacity, it may see significant potential construction cost savings in the refurbishment of surplus military or other facilities. Indeed, if capital cost is the key criteria in determining where a new boarding school should be constructed, a community with a surplus facility would be a logical choice. But if operating costs and the quality of the boarding school experience are the key criteria, the preferred site may be altogether different.

For a complete discussion of these criteria, the interested reader is urged to consult the report on the Boarding School Site Criteria available in the final version of the *Rural Alaska Secondary Education Study*.